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NRO review(s) completed.

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7 JUL 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : Satellite Operations Center

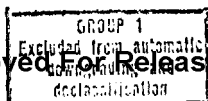
1. This memorandum is for your information and sets forth the reasoning which prompts us to recommend that the Satellite Operations Center (SOC) be returned to the Central Intelligence Agency.

2. The essential elements of our satellite reconnaissance programs are three in number. The first element is the development and operation of the reconnaissance system itself. The second is the actual launching, tracking, and recovery of the reconnaissance payload. The third is the scheduling, orbit selection, targeting, and orbital tasking of such missions to meet national reconnaissance targets.

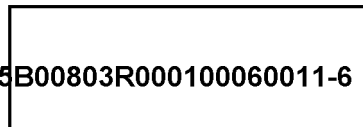
3. There is considerable and active discussion as to which organization, or organizations, should develop and provide the satellite payloads. There seems to be clear acceptance that the launching, tracking, and recovery is the responsibility of the Department of Defense while the scheduling, targeting, and orbital tasking of our reconnaissance payloads are the responsibility of the Intelligence Community (USIB) working through the Satellite Operations Center.

4. The question before us at the moment is how shall the Director of Central Intelligence carry out the responsibility of tasking and, more specifically, how does his responsibility relate to the Satellite Operations Center?

5. The concept of a satellite operations center responsive to the Community's requirements was first put in practice by CIA with the launching of CORONA in 1960.



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It was well recognized that a mechanism was needed to translate USIB target requirements into orbital selection and on-orbit camera programming. At that time, CORONA was the only operational member of the satellite family, but following the formalization of the NRO, and the advent of other programs, a desire to centralize all satellite activities involved in reconnaissance operations resulted in the transfer of the Satellite Operations Center from the Agency to the Pentagon in April 1963.

6. We now submit that while there is some wisdom in centralizing satellite intelligence tasking, such an activity is more appropriately a function of the CIA under the DCI than a responsibility of the National Reconnaissance Office. The attached extract which outlines the present responsibilities of the Satellite Operations Center clearly substantiates our position in that the SOC is identified as a unit principally engaged in the pursuit of the Intelligence Community's needs and one which we suggest is of "central intelligence" in nature.

7. Although we feel that the functional responsibilities of the SOC themselves are cause enough to place that organization within CIA, there is a very real and tangible advantage in divorcing the SOC from the operational arms of the NRO. By so doing, we would preserve for the SOC an independent outlook vis-a-vis operations, thus ensuring that the programs remain foremost in responsiveness to USIB needs. With the SOC an integral part of the NRO as it now is, there is the constant threat that it could lose its objectivity and permit tasking or orbit selection of reconnaissance satellites to further developmental or research goals as opposed to the present day intelligence requirements. Although such goals may be desirable and necessary, no action to degrade our intelligence take should be entertained without DCI or USIB evaluation. By placing the SOC within the environment of CIA, should the need arise for our reconnaissance satellites to be tasked for ancillary or secondary reasons, the SOC would have an independent channel for recourse directly to the DCI for guidance.

8. We are further encouraged to recommend the return of the SOC in view of the computer and communications support which the SOC presently receives from CIA.

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Moreover, we are confident that there is no function of the SOC which requires that it be located physically within the Pentagon or organizationally placed in proximity to the Air Force. To the contrary, the daily activities of the SOC in mission planning, orbit selection, and targeting require a continuing relationship with various USIB committees located within the Langley headquarters building.

9. In view of the basic responsibilities of the SOC, its necessary and continuing interface with USIB, the role and responsibilities of the DCI, and the desirability of independence regarding NRO developmental experiments, it is recommended that the SOC be transferred to the Central Intelligence Agency.

/s/  
[Redacted]  
Acting Deputy Director  
for  
Science and Technology

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Attachment  
Extract from NRO Document

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